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*A Polish saint. Historical-national themes in Franz Liszt's oratorio 'St Stanislaus'*¹

ABSTRACT: Saint Stanislaus, a Polish bishop murdered in 1079 by King Boleslaus the Bold, is the title character of Franz Liszt's oratorio *St Stanislaus*. The libretto of *St Stanislaus* has several authors – the first author was the Cracow man of letters and folklore scholar Lucjan Siemieński, whom Liszt asked to write a text for his oratorio. The libretto, completed in 1869, was translated by Peter Cornelius, who made certain changes to the order of events. Not until 1874 did Liszt set about writing the music for his oratorio in earnest, and that was when he asked Cornelius to revise the libretto. The author's premature death thwarted that intention, and so Liszt was forced to seek other authors. The version prepared several years later by Karl Erdmann Edler finally met the composer's expectations. In its final version, the libretto comprises four scenes, which form a logical sequence of events and at the same time serve to emphasise Stanislaus' spiritual strength and the causative power of his actions.

Liszt did not succeed in setting the whole text of the libretto; the extant material covers only scenes 1 and 4. The musical style of *St Stanislaus* indicates that the composer drew on various types of musical inspiration and technique. Hence the work is characterised by a certain heterogeneity – a synthetic character that encapsulates a nineteenth-century aesthetics. Nevertheless, the oratorio is undoubtedly one of the most distinctive manifestations of Liszt's interest in Polish subjects. The presence of quotations from the Polish songs 'Boże, coś Polskę' and 'Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła' lends the work a distinct national colouring and evokes a mood of solemnity and religious contemplation, as well as the aura of triumph, victory and domination. Such an attitude may be symptomatic of the typically nineteenth-century perception of Poland as a tormented nation deprived of its statehood, which thanks to its valour and resilience will ultimately regain its independence.

KEYWORDS: Liszt, Saint Stanislaus, oratorio, Polish theme, history

Saint Stanislaus, a martyred bishop murdered in 1079 by King Boleslaus the Bold, is a key figure for the historical-national identity of Poles. Facts and historical interpretations concerning the bishop's life and his conflict with the king were transmitted by the most important chroniclers of Polish history, Gall Anonym, Wincenty Kadłubek and Jan Długosz, but they differ in details and in the way they illumine the political-psychological situation. The lack of clarity over the motives for the crime is particularly marked in the life of Saint Stanislaus written

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by Wincenty of Kielcza during the thirteenth century, and the historical picture is also obscured by the various versions of the legends and tales that circulated for centuries and have endured to our times. The vast literature on Saint Stanislaus fails to give us unequivocal information on the causes of the conflict between the bishop and the king: many different aspects appear in the historical discourse, and different authors draw attention to an ever greater range of issues.² Generally speaking, in texts about Saint Stanislaus, the accents are distributed differently by secular and spiritual authors: the former (such as Tadeusz Wojciechowski and Gerard Labuda) attempt to construct a discourse based solely on historical sources; the latter (for example, Revd Stanisław Belch, author of a monumental monograph of Saint Stanislaus) interpret the historical sources in relation to mystical and worldview issues.

For the present work, the historical issues are not the most important; in any case, they considerably exceed its scope, since its subject is a musical composition – Franz Liszt's oratorio *St Stanislaus*. Although Liszt's output has been studied quite comprehensively, the score of this oratorio³ – one of the composer's last and least known works – was not published until 1998. The work's subject matter is a Polish saint, Bishop Stanisław Szczepanowski, and so this work – as one of the few Polish-related items in the Liszt oeuvre – should be of particular interest in Poland.

As we have become familiar with this work only recently, there is a relative dearth of musicological literature devoted to it. Of crucial importance have been

² The most important monographic historical works devoted to this subject are as follows: Franciszek Buczys, *Św. Stanisław, biskup krakowski* [Saint Stanislaus, a Cracow bishop] (Kraków: Nakładem autora, 1902); Kazimierz Krotoski, *Św. Stanisław, biskup krakowski w świetle historiografii nowożytnej* [Saint Stanislaus, a Cracow bishop in the light of modern historiography] (Toruń: Druk. S. Buszczyńskiego, 1902); Antoni Siuda, *Św. Stanisław w świetle Galla, Kadłubka i Wojciechowskiego* [Saint Stanislaus according to Gall, Kadłubek and Wojciechowski] (Kraków: Nakładem autora, 1910); Tadeusz Wojciechowski, *Szkice historyczne jedenastego wieku* [Historical sketches of the eleventh century] (Warszawa: PIW, 1970); Stanisław Belch, *Św. Stanisław, biskup-męczennik, patron Polaków* [Saint Stanislaus, bishop and martyr, the patron of the Poles] (London: Katolicki Ośrodek Wydawniczy Veritas, 1977); Tadeusz Grudziński, *Bolesław Śmiały-Szczodry i biskup Stanisław: dzieje konfliktu* [Boleslaus the Bold-Generous and the bishop Stanislaus: a history of the conflict] (Warszawa: Interpress, 1983); Jan Kurek, *Eucharystia, biskup i król: kult św. Stanisława w Polsce* [Eucharysty, the bishop and the king: worship of St. Stanislaus in Poland] (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1998); Gerard Labuda, *Święty Stanisław, biskup krakowski, patron Polski: śladami zabójstwa – męczeństwa – kanonizacji* [Saint Stanislaus, a Cracow bishop, a Polish patron: on the traces of his murder, martyrdom, and canonization] (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2000); Bolesław Przybyszewski, *Św. Stanisław, Biskup Męczennik: sprawa świętego Stanisława, biografia, legenda, kult, ikonografia, polemika z Gerardem Labudą* [Saint Stanislaus, a bishop and martyr: the case of Saint Stanislaus: biography, legend, worship, iconography, polemics with Gerard Labuda] (Rzeszów: De Arte, 2005).

³ The planned title of this work was *Die Legende vom heiligen Stanislaus*, analogous to *Die Legende von der heiligen Elisabeth* (1857-1862), the first of Liszt's three oratorios.

the efforts of Paul Munson, who has completed a thorough examination of the oratorio's extant materials, published the score with an extensive commentary on the work and its fortunes⁴ and also written several works devoted to *St Stanislaus*. In the last few years, Liszt's oratorio has attracted the interest of other scholars as well: Stefan Keym and the Polish academic Joanna Subel.⁵ It is difficult to arrive at a competent and legitimate analysis and interpretation of this work: not only was it not finished by Liszt, but it also represents an agglomeration of various styles, tendencies and phases in the composer's output. Writing it over more than a decade (from 1869 until his death, in 1886), he incorporated into it fragments composed much earlier (in the 1850s). When we also take into account the different versions of the libretto that he used at various stages in his work on the oratorio, it turns out that this forgotten composition is a kind of open work, resistant to easy assessment or straightforward interpretation. However, the availability of the published materials and the recordings of the work that have already been made⁶ encourage us to study it.

The libretto of *St Stanislaus* has several authors, as Munson describes in detail in an article devoted to the subject.⁷ The first author was the Cracow man of letters and folklore scholar Lucjan Siemieński, whom Liszt asked to write a text for his oratorio.⁸ Siemieński's work, entitled *Legenda liryczna o świętym Stanisławie biskupie i męczenniku* [Lyrical legend of Saint Stanislaus, bishop and martyr], is divided into three short parts (acts), played out in different locations in and around Cracow: Solec, Wawel Hill and the church on the Rock.

Part I: *Solec*. King Boleslaus accuses Bishop Stanislaus of not paying for landed estate he has acquired. Stanislaus declares that he will find someone who can vouch that he paid; it turns out that the person in question is the former owner, the knight Piotr (Piotrowin), who died three years before. In front of the little

⁴ Franz Liszt, *St. Stanislaus; Scene 1, Two Polonaises, Scene 4*, ed. Paul Manson (Madison: A-R Editions, 1998).

⁵ Stefan Keym, "Patria in religione et religio in patria. Liszts *Salve Polonia* und die Tradition politisch-religiös konnotierter Instrumentalmusik", in: *Musik – Politik – Ästhetik. Detlef Altenburg zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Axel Schröter (Sinzig: Studio Verlag, 2012), 478–497. Joanna Subel's text is published in the present volume. The author is grateful to Mr Stefan Keym for making his text available prior to publication and to Mrs Joanna Subel for her assistance in acquiring the score of the work.

⁶ The first recording was made in 2004. Performers: Kristine Jepson (mezzosopran), Donnie Ray Albert (baritone), Michael Chertock (organ), May Festival Chorus, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, conducted by James Conlon, Telarc CD-80607.

⁷ Paul Munson, "The Librettos for Liszt's Oratorio *St. Stanislaus*", *Music and Letters* 78 (1997/4), 532–550.

⁸ Siemieński describes this in his published text: 'And I felt true joy upon receiving this spring a call from Vienna to arrange with the composer, residing there, for an oratorio from the ecclesiastic history of Poland. Lucyan Siemieński, *Legenda liryczna o ś. Stanisławie biskupie i męczenniku* [Lyrical legend of Saint Stanislaus, bishop and martyr] (Kraków: Czas, 1870), preface, no page number.

church of St Thomas in the village of Piotrowin, the bishop bids the dead man to rise from the grave:

'In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
Piotrowin, I awake you:
I summon you from the dead into this world'.⁹

The events are related by the Hermit, who is the principal narrator of this scene; the bishop's nanny also appears as the action unfolds. Piotrowin rises from the grave, as the king is informed by his subjects. Yet neither the king nor the dead man's nephews lend credence to the account, regarding it as a deception. Stanislaus arrives with Piotrowin, who is recognised by members of his family and his neighbours. Piotrowin declares: 'The bishop took the village; I took money for the village'.¹⁰

Part II: *Wawel Hill*. The oppressed people complain about the king and his rule, asking Stanislaus for assistance. The bishop listens to their opinions and decides to confront Boleslaus. A feast is taking place at the royal court: the king is flirting with the captive woman Krystyna. Stanislaus enters with the words 'I have come to flush the devil from you, o king'.¹¹ The king mocks Stanislaus, but the bishop, defending Krystyna's sacramental marriage, takes her away, and none of the courtiers prevents him. Then a service is held in Wawel Cathedral. The bishop censures the king's actions and casts a curse upon him:

*Już się przebrała nieprawości czara
Król nasz Bolesław sługą jest szatana.*

[...]

Gdy nie pomogły łzy moje i prośby,

Przestrogi, posty pokutne i groźby,

*Więc cię wyklinam, królu Bolesławie.*¹²

The cup of iniquity doth runneth o'er
Our king Boleslaus is in Satan's service.

[...]

Since nothing has come of my tears and
my pleas,

My warnings, penitential fasting and
threats,

I cast a curse upon you, king Boleslaus.

The king, not cowed by the curse, wants to enter the church, but the bishop orders that the monarch be refused admission.

Part III: *Church on the Rock*. The king enquires about Stanislaus and threatens him with torture. The king's troops enter the church, where the bishop is praying for the homeland's salvation and declaring his wish for martyrdom. The king orders his myrmidons to kill Stanislaus, but they recoil from committing the crime at the altar, so the murder is committed by Boleslaus himself:

⁹ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹¹ Ibid., 27.

¹² Ibid., 32-33.

Z saraceńskim tym mieczem pójdę – sam uderzę,
Zobaczę, czy mi serce zadrgnie, miecz się skruszy.¹³

(I'll go with this Saracen sword – I will strike the blow,
And I'll see if my heart quakes and the sword turns to dust.)

Boleslaus kills the bishop and orders that his body be cut into pieces. The appalled populace comments on the situation and Stanislaus' nanny appears once again. A voice from heaven declares that the bishop will be blessed as a martyr of the Church. Another miracle occurs: the pieces of the bishop's dismembered body grow back together. The hymn *Gaude Mater Polonia* rings out.

The work's short, succinct text shows that Siemieński was familiar with the principles governing the writing of a libretto for a vocal-instrumental work; in his preface, he states that his concept was of a 'lyrical-dramatic form'. Each of the short parts of the text features one key event: respectively, the resurrection of Piotrowin, the cursing of Boleslaus and the murder of the bishop. The author was also aware that Liszt was not familiar with Polish and that the Polish text would therefore have to be translated into German. The libretto, completed in 1869, was translated by Peter Cornelius, who made certain changes to the order of events.

Yet work on the composition lasted much longer, affected by Liszt's health problems. Not until 1874 did he set about writing the music for his oratorio in earnest, and that was when he asked Cornelius to revise the libretto. The author's premature death, in October 1874, thwarted that intention, and so Liszt was forced to seek other authors. The version prepared several years later (1880; second redaction 1883) by Karl Erdmann Edler finally met the composer's expectations.¹⁴ In this version, a new motif appears, connected with King Boleslaus' pilgrimage, at the end of the work, to the monastery in Ossiach, Carinthia, and his eight-year stay there in an endeavour to atone for the murder. In this new version of the libretto, the king's penitence offered an opportunity to accentuate Stanislaus' moral victory, which was more to Liszt's way of thinking.¹⁵

In its final version, the libretto comprises four scenes, which form a logical sequence of events – different to that in Siemieński's text – and at the same time serve to emphasise Stanislaus' spiritual strength and the causative power of his actions.

Scene 1: *The Cry of the Oppressed* (*Der Schrei der Bedrückten*). The action takes place in front of Wawel Cathedral. The afflicted Polish people are complaining about King Boleslaus the Bold, under whose reign they are suffering violence and hunger. Bishop Stanislaus decides to approach the king on behalf of the nation.

¹³ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴ In the preface to the edition of the score, Munson lists all the successive authors who tried to write a libretto for this oratorio. See Liszt, *St. Stanislaus*, vii.

¹⁵ Gerhard J. Winkler, "Franz Liszt und der 'Stumme Büsser von Ossiach'", *Die Brücke: Kärntner Kulturzeitschrift* 12 (1986/2), 13-16.

He is strengthened in this resolution by his mother, who sees in Stanislaus the shepherd and defender of the Polish nation.

Scene 2: *The King's Feast (Das Königsmahl)*. King Boleslaus and his courtiers are celebrating the anniversary of the invasion of Kiev, and the courtiers are urging the king to make further conquests. Representatives of the populace arrive and tell the king that the nation is hungry and suffering, but the angry Boleslaus treats them like rebels and sends them away empty-handed. The situation is complicated by the entrance of Bishop Stanislaus, who rebukes the king and warns him that the people could rise up. Boleslaus has no wish to listen to such lectures and points out that the bishop is behaving shamefully, since he has not paid Piotr for the estate he acquired. Stanislaus denies this, stating that he paid for the estate, but the king demands witnesses. The bishop promises to find some.

Scene 3: *The Miracle of Waking the Dead (Das Wunder der Auferweckung)*. The action of this scene takes place in a church cemetery in Cracow. Boleslaus accuses the bishop, who again declares that he paid. The defunct's brothers and heirs, however, contradict him, prompting Stanislaus to pronounce that God will call the late Piotr himself as a witness. The bishop's mother prays for assistance for his son. Stanislaus commands Piotr to rise from the grave. The miracle of resurrection ensues: the grave opens and the dead man appears. The king wants to treat the whole affair as a deception, but Piotr's brothers confirm the risen man's identity. Piotr corroborates the bishop's words, and Stanislaus orders the king to humble himself to God. The livid king cries that it is the work of the devil and kills the bishop.

Scene 4. King Boleslaus wishes to do penance for his deed. He undertakes a pilgrimage to the monastery of Ossiach in Carinthia, where he spends the rest of his days as a monk. The hymnic *Salve Polonia* suggests the nation's deliverance.

The libretto's four scenes have a slightly different character, resonance and drama to one another. The framework for Scene 1 comprises the people's lament, on one hand, and the solo aria of the bishop's mother, on the other; between those utterances, a sequence of shorter parts unfolds, in which the people's doubts and Stanislaus' spiritual strength are emphasised. Given the lack of development to events, this scene may be treated as an epic outlining of the situation. Scene 2 is characterised by a significant heightening of the drama. Both the arrival of the envoys and the entrance of the bishop provoke the king into increasingly violent reactions. The utterances of the various characters are short and concise, and the vehemence of the interjections by the chorus of courtiers is reminiscent of the utterances of the populace (*turba*) in Baroque passion plays. Scene 3 maintains that dramatic character to events: the reactions of the crowd and of the individual commentators to the rising of Piotr are intertwined with direct utterances by witnesses to the event,¹⁶ and so relation and revelation are strongly interconnected. The bishop's triumph brings an even greater affect from the king, who strikes him with his sword.

¹⁶ The underlying construction of this scene is marked by the combining of narrative and dramatic styles. One example of this is the moment when Piotr comes back to life: one of the

Scene 4, entirely devoid of action and dialogue, is of an allegoric character, serving to emphasise Saint Stanislaus' causative role in the history of Poland.

From that scenario to the work, we can see that the two middle scenes of the oratorio are clearly marked by a dramatic character and contain the key events of the action: the bishop's resolute challenging of the king and the demonstration of God's support for Stanislaus' stance. Scene 1 serves as the introduction, while Scene 4, which closes the work, is a reflective-contemplative ending imbued with transcendental references. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that this last scene features prayer and religious devotion: the psalm *De profundis* and the hymn *Salve Polonia*. The way in which the events are depicted in the libretto, with realistic events juxtaposed with the scene of the miraculous resurrection, reminds one of mediaeval mysteries about the saints, characterised by the intertwining of hagiographic and historical elements. Meanwhile, the end of Boleslaus' pilgrimage and the triumph of Saint Stanislaus' ideas appear to shift the narrative in the direction of morality plays, in which good triumphs over evil and a secular power is forced to bow down before God and his earthly representatives.

Liszt did not succeed in setting the whole text of the libretto; the extant material covers only scenes 1 and 4, with the aria of the bishop's mother from Scene 1 preserved solely in an uninstrumented form.¹⁷ As Munson notes in his preface to the edition of the score, we can find clues in Liszt's correspondence from the 70s and 80s that the other two scenes may also have been composed – at least in part; but the musical material of those sections is not known or has been lost.¹⁸ So the work is incomplete and can only constitute a source of speculation as to the way in which Liszt intended to set those much more dramatic middle scenes.

In its existing form, the score falls into the following discernible parts:

Scene 1

Orchestral preface

Chorus: 'Qual und Leid'

Recitative: 'Kindlein! Was weinet ihr?'

Chorus: 'Beschütz uns'

Aria: 'Mein Sohn, o still des Volkes Not' (version for voice and piano)

women pilgrims relates what she has witnessed, after which the bishop, addressing the dead man directly, orders him to rise from the grave:

Woman pilgrim: 'Hark what a dreadful tale unfolds, / the earth's depths are moving with a rumble'. Bishop: 'Piotr, rise!'. Liszt, *St. Stanislaus*, libretto, 209, v. 105–107.

¹⁷ The CD recording contains this aria in a version for voice and orchestra. The commentary included with the disc (also by Paul Munson) does not state, however, who wrote the instrumentation; we find only the remark that it was made in a style typical of Liszt's works from the 70s. : "[...] the bishop's mother's aria, which Liszt left in piano-vocal score, has been orchestrated in a manner consistent with his other orchestral works from 1870s." Commentary to Telarc CD-80607, 2.

¹⁸ Liszt, *St. Stanislaus*, preface to score, ix. We may speculate from the excerpts from Liszt's correspondence quoted there that the composer may have set Scene 2. However, there is no trace of this in the composer's known manuscripts.

Scene 4

Orchestral interlude 1 'Salve Polonia'

Orchestral interlude 2 'Salve Polonia'

Psalm 129 'De profundis'

Chorus 'Salve Polonia'

Those extant fragments were written at different times. Liszt began writing Scene 1 in 1874, shortly after receiving from Cornelius the revised version of his translation of Siemieński's libretto. The text used in this scene is completely different to Edler's version, from several years later, which was accepted by Liszt; the composer clearly had no intention of rewriting his work and in this scene left the libretto in its earlier form. However, Siemieński's original does not contain the lengthy utterances by the bishop's nanny (a character replaced by his mother), and so it is impossible to establish who wrote the text of the mother's aria 'Mein Sohn, o still des Volkes Not'.

The story of how Scene 4 came into being is even more involved. The two orchestral interludes entitled 'Salve Polonia' were composed much earlier and in a completely different style. Munson notes that in 1884 Liszt merely reworked a fantasy on two Polish national airs that he had written twenty years earlier (Rome, 1863). Keym, meanwhile, analyses the problem in detail, linking the genesis of these two orchestral interludes with a 'Revolution Symphony' that Liszt had been planning since the 30s. In one of the versions of that five-movement symphony, dating from 1849, the composer considered including (as the third part of the cycle) a movement based on two national melodies: a Hungarian ('Rákóczy March') and a Polish ('Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła').¹⁹ After ultimately abandoning the idea of composing the symphony, Liszt set about writing *Salve Polonia* in 1863, possibly inspired by the situation of Poland during the period of the January Rising.²⁰ Completed in December 1863, that composition was not published at the time, but in 1884 a version for piano and orchestra was issued (under the title *Salve Polonia, Interludium aus dem Oratorium Stanislaus*).²¹ While writing the oratorio, Liszt decided to make use of that work and – after making changes and revisions – incorporated it into Scene 4.²²

¹⁹ S. Keym, "Patria in religione et religio in patria", 482–483.

²⁰ Ibid., 486.

²¹ The work's manuscript, dedicated to Camille Saint-Saëns, is held in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (F-Pn, Ms. 153). The edition was published by Kahnt of Leipzig in 1884, in versions for two and for four hands.

²² Keym states that despite the rewriting, involving the incorporation of musical motives associated with Boleslaus into the work, some eighty per cent of the original material was retained and the instrumentation was also left intact. „Trotz dieser Änderungen entsprechen etwa 80 Prozent des gedruckten Orchesterwerks der Komposition von 1863; auch die Instrumentierung der übernommenen Teile wurde weitgehend tongetreu beibehalten". S. Keym, "Patria in religione et religio in patria", 494.

Also among the material connected with the composing of *St Stanislaus* are two piano polonaises that Liszt probably intended to use in the oratorio. Such is indicated by their title, *Deux Polonaises de l'oratorio Stanislaus*, and also by their inclusion of motivic material that appears in the oratorio. On that account, they were reproduced in the score published by Munson, who nevertheless stresses that they could have been 'reminiscence'-type compositions.²³ Liszt probably meant to publish them together with the piano version of *Salve Polonia* issued in 1884. The psalm 'De profundis' from Scene 4, meanwhile, was published as *Der 129. Psalm (De profundis)* for bass (alto) and piano or organ in 1886.²⁴

The style of the oratorio indicates that Liszt drew on various types of musical inspiration and technique. Hence it is characterised by a certain heterogeneity – a synthetic character that encapsulates a nineteenth-century aesthetic.

Liszt's earlier experimentation with the oratorio genre is reflected in the way he wrote the vocal parts, which are devoid of virtuosic elements and have a serious, declamatory character. In the extant musical version of two of the four scenes, there appear only three solo characters: in Scene 1 Bishop Stanislaus (baritone) and his mother (mezzo-soprano) and in Scene 4 King Boleslaus (baritone). The solo parts are led in a declamatory way, dominated by arioso and recitative parts, with cantilena elements only marked in the mother's aria.

The choral parts play separate roles in the work's two scenes. In Scene 1, the chorus has a dramatic function and can be identified with the downtrodden Polish populace; the choral texture in this scene is characterised by simplicity, and the emotions expressed by the chorus are mainly sadness and uncertainty. A similar mood dominates the penitential psalm *De profundis* that opens Scene 4, although later the chorus adopts a hymnic character, singing the hymn *Salve Polonia*. The work is dominated by a simplification of the choral style, manifest in the one-part singing of the chorus and *a cappella* passages. The frequent stylisations and plain-song quotations, connected with diatonic and modal sequences, link the work to the aesthetic of the Cecilian movement in nineteenth-century religious music of the Catholic environment, emphasising the contemplative and meditative function of church music. The forging of that expressive aura is enhanced by the use of an organ in a chorale-like way.

Scenes 2 and 3, the text of which suggests much more violent reactions from the ensembles and a much stronger dramatic component, must have been written differently. We may even suppose that in those scenes Liszt would have employed operatic style to some extent – the dramatic construction of the confrontation between the bishop and the king brings to mind the scene with the Grand Inquisitor from Verdi's *Don Carlos*, and the scene of Piotr's resurrection would doubtless have provided an opportunity for suggesting the aura of a mystic miracle. It remains

²³ P. Munson, preface to Liszt, *St. Stanislaus*, ix.

²⁴ Kahnt of Leipzig, 1886.

a matter of speculation as to whether the composer would have drawn on typical nineteenth-century operatic techniques for characterising the other world. The use in the existing scenes of a number of typical musical phrases and topoi, including the parametric use of the key of E major in a grand, ceremonial function and also of elements of musical rhetoric, visible in the imitation of crying by sequences of semitones, attests Liszt's strong connection with means of musical depiction that were typical of the Romantic aesthetic.

Even in the existing scenes 1 and 4, we can discern the presence of leitmotiv technique: both oppositional characters are given their own musical motives. However, those motives do not serve to characterise their personalities; they are merely a way of ensuring the material of coherence. One might say, therefore, that Liszt makes only limited use of Romantic solutions in this work and draws more extensively on ideas that are characteristic of his late compositional style. He repeatedly goes beyond functional relations in the harmonic writing and employs unconventionally constructed chords (e.g. the chord f-e-c-b in Scene 4). A peculiar expressive asceticism and contemplative character link this work to the category of late work, which in Liszt's case is associated with softening, with ascetic musical narrative, and with a reduction in the role of the dramatic element.

The two orchestral interludes entitled 'Salve Polonia' betray a different style to the rest of the work. The inclusion of these orchestral pieces, composed twenty years earlier, left the work stylistically inconsistent: in these sections, there is a discernible drawing on the Beethoven tradition, which remained lively throughout the nineteenth century, and on Romantic symphonic technique in general. The style of these interludes triggers associations with solutions characteristic of the Lisztian symphonic poem, with an extensive use of development technique and motivic working. The material of the first interlude is based on a quotation from the Polish religious song 'Boże, coś Polskę' [God, Thou who Poland], whilst in the second interlude the composer employs a quotation from the national anthem, 'Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła' [Poland has not yet perished], combining and intertwining it with the melody of 'Boże, coś Polskę'. The quotations from those melodies are clear and self-evident; 'Boże, coś Polskę' generally takes on a hymnic character (linked to its chordal arrangement), whilst in 'Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła' it is a dance element that is brought to the fore, with a lively tempo and accentuation of the mazurka rhythmic contour. In the closing phase of the second interlude, Liszt uses the song's refrain ('March, march Dąbrowski') in a more solemn form, lending it the traits of a polonaise (specified in the score: 'Tempo di Polacca').

Such features of these interludes as the distinct symphonic character, the strong dynamic contrasts and even the use of a typically Romantic turn figure betray their much earlier composition and also a different approach to compositional technique than in Liszt's later output. The composer was clearly aware of this, since in deciding to include these interludes he arranged them in such a way that they linked at least partially with the salient features of the oratorio: calm, restraint and a lack of

contrasts. This is particularly marked in the solemn opening segment to the first of the interludes, the material of which features reminiscences of musical motives from the oratorio's first scene.

The oratorio *St Stanislaus* is undoubtedly one of the most distinctive manifestations of Liszt's interest in Polish subjects. Yet it was by no means the only one: the composer maintained contacts with Polish musicians, and he also performed a few times in Polish lands during his concert tours. He no doubt gleaned a great deal of information about Polish culture and history from Princess Carolyne von Sayn-Wittgenstein, descended from the aristocratic Polish house of Iwanowski, with whom he was friendly for many years and intended to wed. It was with his planned marriage to Carolyne in mind that in 1853 Liszt wrote the symphonic poem *Festklänge*, in which a polonaise is used not just to enhance the ceremonial atmosphere, but also suggests the princess's family background.²⁵ Liszt also composed earlier two virtuosic piano polonaises, different to those which Munson included with the published score of *St Stanislaus*. As we learn from the subject literature, Liszt even intended to use in his oratorio the melody and text of the hymn *Gaude Mater Polonia*, devoted to St Stanislaus, which in Poland was treated almost like a national anthem.²⁶

The presence of quotations from the Polish songs 'Boże, coś Polskę' and 'Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła' lends the work a distinct national colouring. The lyrical-hymnic character of 'Boże, coś Polskę' evokes a mood of solemnity and religious contemplation, whilst 'Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła' gave Liszt the opportunity to introduce the rhythms of Polish national dances: mazur and polonaise. Both interludes end in an aura of triumph, victory and domination, which may be symptomatic of the typically nineteenth-century perception of Poland as a tormented nation deprived of its statehood, which thanks to its valour and resilience will ultimately regain its independence. Such a mode of representation marked most of the programmatic symphonic works devoted to Poland, such as Richard Wagner's overture *Polonia*, Auguste Holmès's symphonic poem *Pologne* and Edward Elgar's later symphonic prelude *Polonia*. Like those composers, Liszt turned to quotations from Polish songs as a way of depicting the Polish national identity.

²⁵ "The polonaise sections are almost certainly both topical and symbolic references to the Princess' Polish background". Keith T. Johns, *The Symphonic Poems of Franz Liszt* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1997), 82.

²⁶ "*Gaude Mater Polonia* occurs in sketches for *St Stanislaus* (Q17)". Maria Eckhardt, Rena Charnin Mueller, "Liszt, Franz, 28: Style, reception, posterity", in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article_works/grove/music/48265pg28#S48265.29.12 (updated; this information is not contained in the printed version).

